

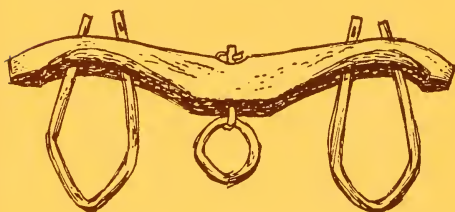
# BOY OF THE BACKWOODS



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# BOY of the BACKWOODS

By CLYDE ELIZABETH YEATON



*Illustrated by Gladys Michell*

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## A Farm in Kentucky

Lincoln  
Boggs

Abe stood with his long legs far apart. In both hands he held an ax high above his head. Each time he brought the ax down on the small log, he made it cut deeper until a piece of wood big enough for the fireplace dropped off. Every day Abe's work was to cut logs for the fireplace.

"Abe, Abe," called a clear, sweet voice. The boy raised his head and looked at the cabin where his mother stood. He put down the ax and walked toward her.

“Sarah and I are going to the woods to pick berries,” said Mrs. Lincoln. “Would you like to go with us?”

Abe smiled and nodded. He hung an empty bucket on each arm and ran ahead of the others across the pasture. In the woods along Knob Creek the bushes of wild berries grew close together. They were covered with fat, juicy berries, ripe enough to fall off.

“This is fun!” exclaimed Abe, as he went from one bush to another, picking the largest berries he could find. “I see the birds like to pick them, too.”

“Yes,” said Sarah, “and you like berries just as much as the birds do. You eat more than you put in your bucket.”

Abe laughed and began to pick very fast. When Mrs. Lincoln and Sarah had finished, Abe surprised them by showing a full bucket also.

Almost every day Abe worked from morning until night. His father and mother taught him how to do many things. He was a great help to them even if he was just seven years old.

In the autumn Abe liked to thread thick pieces of apple and pumpkin on long strings. Then his father hung the strings near the roof to dry. When they dried that way, the apple and pumpkin would keep all winter.





When it was time to make soap, Abe built a fire outside and kept it burning under the big, black kettle. Into the kettle went the pieces of fat which Mrs. Lincoln had saved. After the fat had melted, lye was added. Soon a soft yellow soap was made.

Abe was always ready to hold the wicks in the candle molds while his mother poured hot tallow around them. The candles came out of the molds—long, straight, and white.

One day Mrs. Lincoln said, "I want you to learn how to read and write, Abe."

She had heard that the country school was going to open and wanted her boy to go there. Abe knew he would have to walk four miles over a rough road to reach the school. He did not mind that for he knew he would like school.

So it was that Abe Lincoln began to grow up on the backwoods farm.





## What the Rain Did

One spring morning Abe heard his father go to the shed to feed the horses. At once Abe crawled from under the heavy quilt and put on his clothes.

"I must hurry," he said, "for this is the day I am to help Father with the planting."

Mr. Lincoln told Abe to get on a horse. He gave Abe a bag of pumpkin seeds to hold in his lap. In front of and behind the boy were big sacks of corn seed which his father would plant in the soft ground.

Abe was happy. It was the first time he was to help with the planting. His father said they would plant the pumpkin seeds between the hills of corn. He told Abe not to make the holes too close together because when the pumpkins grew, they would need room to spread. Abe put three seeds into each hole.

Abe worked slowly for a time; but soon he was able to keep up with his father who was planting corn in the long rows. When the last row was planted, Mr. Lincoln helped Abe on the horse's back and then he got on, too.

"We have walked enough for one day," he said. "You have been a great help, Abe."

Mrs. Lincoln and Sarah were waiting at the open door of the cabin.

"The field is all planted, Mother," Abe shouted proudly. "I am as hungry as a bear. I hope supper is ready."

Abe filled his bowl with mush made from corn, but before he could finish eating, his eyes were so heavy he could hardly keep awake. He soon fell asleep.

During the night, a storm came up. Abe heard it and hoped the rain would not come in between the logs and get the cabin wet.

In the morning, Abe and his father walked down the road to the field they had planted the day before. Some of the seeds had been washed out of the ground. Abe was surprised when he saw what had happened.

Slowly he turned to his father and cried, "What will we do now?"

"We will have to do the planting over again," answered Mr. Lincoln. "We need to put away corn and pumpkins for next winter's food."







## Days at Knob Creek

Abe often played with Austin, a boy on the next farm. The boys liked to wrestle. Abe could throw Austin on the ground and could keep him there.

One day when the boys were playing on the bank of Knob Creek, Austin said, "Let's look for a log, Abe. We need a bridge so we can walk over the creek."

The boys found an old tree on the ground. They carried it to the bank of the creek and rolled it into the water.

"You go over first, Abe, and I will hold the bridge in place," said Austin.

Abe bravely stepped on the bridge, but it went down and water rushed over his feet. He could hardly see the log at all.

"Help me, Austin!" shouted Abe.

Then up went Abe's feet as high as they could go! Down went the rest of him!

"Here, Abe!" shouted Austin. "Take hold of this pole! I will pull you out."

Abe caught the end of the pole, and Austin pulled him safely to the shore. Abe was somewhat frightened. His wet clothes hung close to his body. Water ran from his black hair.

"The water was very deep, Austin," said Abe. "If you had not helped me with that pole, I wouldn't have been able to reach shore alone."

"I am glad I thought about handing you the pole," Austin replied.



Abe sat in the sun to dry his clothes. Now that he was safe, his fall seemed funny. He had to laugh at how he must have looked with his feet high in the air.

When Abe's clothes were dry, the boys were ready for another adventure.

"Let's go to see the flatboat Father and I made of some logs. Father wants to buy a farm near the Ohio River, and the best way to get there is by flatboat."



Mr. Lincoln was a carpenter as well as a farmer, so he knew how to make a flatboat. Abe had helped by handing him the tools.

After the logs had been cut, Abe and his father had tied them together with strips of animal skins which they had saved. The skins held the logs together so well that they could not pull apart when the flatboat was in the water.

A long pole had been made. Mr. Lincoln would push the pole in the water to make the flatboat go.

"Father is going to take a load of things with him," explained Abe. "We will make a bundle in the middle of the flatboat. We will need the things in our new home."

"Wouldn't you like to go with your Father?" Austin asked.

"Yes," answered Abe, "but I must stay at home and do the work while Father is away."



### Mr. Lincoln Returns

Mr. Lincoln was away from home for a long time. It seemed queer to Abe to be doing the work alone. He gave food to the animals and brought water from the creek.

Abe's mother was busy getting ready to move to Indiana. The cow was sold because she could not walk all the way to Indiana. When a neighbor led the cow away, Abe went down the road with them. It was hard to say good-bye to the cow, for she had been a pet to the whole family.

Mrs. Lincoln sold a few pieces of furniture. Some she gave away, for she could not take any of it with her. Furniture would have to be made when the new home was reached.

In the long evenings after supper, Abe sat between Mrs. Lincoln and Sarah at the door of the cabin. He liked to listen to the songs which his mother sang. He never sang with her because his voice did not seem to have a song in it.

Abe liked to have his mother read from the Bible, too. It was the only book she owned. She had read the Bible so many times, she could tell the stories word by word.

Several months passed. One day, Mr. Lincoln walked into the cabin tired and hungry. He told the family that he had left his load with a storekeeper. He had sold the flatboat to a man who wanted to go farther down the river.





“Father, Father,” cried Abe, “tell us about your trip. Did you see any Indians?”

“Yes, I did see a few Indians,” answered Mr. Lincoln. “They were very friendly.”

He told how he had gone across the wide Ohio River and how one time the flatboat had almost turned over. His tools had slid into the water and were lost. He said he had a fine farm for their home. He thought they should leave at once, if they were to reach the end of their journey and get settled before snow came.

“When we arrive, we will build a camp,” explained Mr. Lincoln. “We will have to stay some place until our home is ready. It takes a long time to cut trees and build a cabin.”

“What is a camp?” asked Sarah.

“The camp we build will be like a shed. It will have only three sides,” Mr. Lincoln answered. “The front will be open. We will have a big fire burning to give us heat when cold weather comes. The fire will keep away wild animals. Mother can do her cooking on the red coals. To cut wood for the fire will keep us busy.”

Abe’s eyes were bright as he thought of the long journey ahead. He looked at his father and smiled slowly.

“I do not mind if I have to cut wood all day long,” Abe said. “We are going to a new place and we will build a fine cabin. Mother will be very proud of it, I know.”



## A Journey on Horseback

Everyone at the Lincoln home was busy. Mrs. Lincoln gave Abe several quilts. She gave Sarah a bundle of clothes.

“Your Father will tie them on the horses,” said their mother, as she hurried to pack.

When everything had been brought from the cabin, Abe climbed on one horse behind his father. Abe led another horse which carried most of their things. Then came the last horse with Sarah and Mrs. Lincoln on it.



The journey was a wonderful adventure to Abe. Day after day, the Lincolns rode over the fields and through the woods.

Each night the horses were unloaded so they could rest. Sometimes Mr. Lincoln found a cabin where the family could stay. Most of the time, however, they wrapped quilts around themselves and went to sleep on the ground.

"We have seen many squirrels and rabbits," said Abe's mother one day. "They would make a good meal."

"I have been so busy chopping branches out of our way, I have not had time to do any hunting," replied Mr. Lincoln. "Today I will go hunting."

Off he went through the woods. He came back with two rabbits. Abe ran to get more wood, and soon the meat was cooking over the fire. Then what a good supper the Lincoln family had!

At last the Lincolns reached the Ohio River. There was not a house to be seen. The place was very quiet.

As soon as darkness came, Mr. Lincoln built a fire which burned most of the night. The fire was to let a man across the river know the Lincolns had arrived. How happy the Lincolns were the next morning when they saw the man coming across the river toward them on his flatboat! The flatboat looked very small, but as it came nearer, it grew larger and larger.

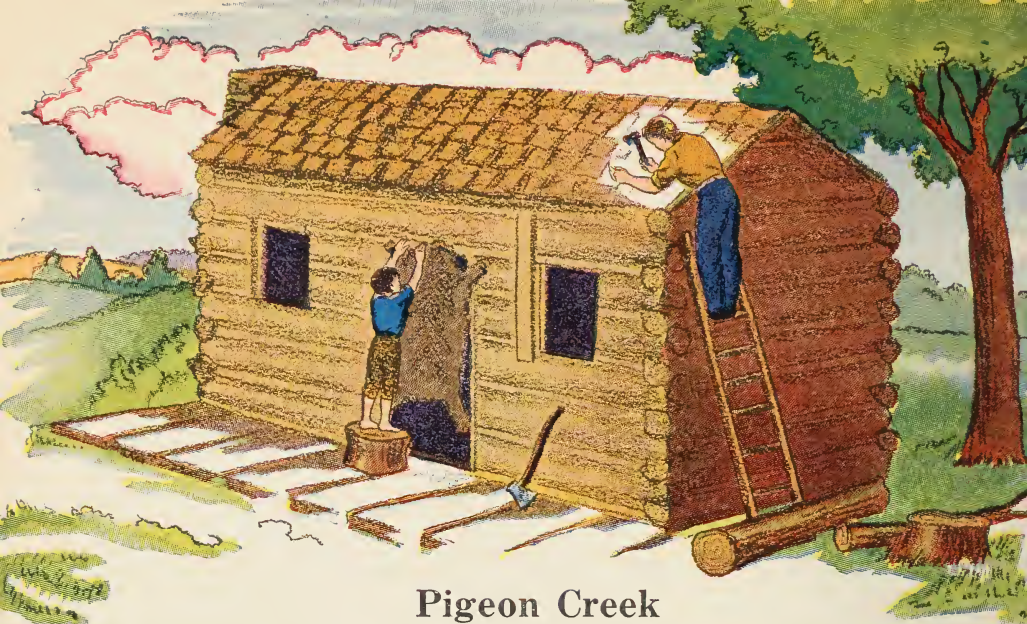
The man on the flatboat slowly made his way across the river. When he reached the shore, he tied the boat fast to a tree.

Abe's eyes were shining as he got on the flatboat. At last he was crossing a river! He held the horses still while his father helped the man push the flatboat. It was a slow trip, but with every push the green shore got nearer.



When, at last, the flatboat arrived safely, another man called out to Mr. Lincoln. He was the storekeeper and he had borrowed a wagon for the Lincolns to use. Soon it was loaded and the horses were fastened to it. Abe, as well as the rest of the family, could hardly wait to get to Pigeon Creek, where they were to make their new home.





## Pigeon Creek

Mr. Lincoln and Abe worked a long time to build a cabin with one room. They chopped down trees and made beds, a table, and other furniture. In front of the door opening they hung skins to keep out the rain and snow.

For the first time Abe had a sleeping place of his own. It was over the big room. Wooden pins had been driven into the wall so he could go up and down. His bed, which he thought was very soft, was made of some quilts which were put on the floor.

After the family had their new cabin to live in, they let travelers rest in the camp. Many people stopped for a night or two. They thought Abe was a fine boy because he helped them in so many ways. Abe liked to listen to the stories the travelers had to tell.

Mrs. Lincoln was kind to these people. When they were ill, she nursed them. One day she herself became ill. Her family did everything they could to make her well again but it was no use. She died and they buried her in the woods near the cabin.

After that Mr. Lincoln and the children were very lonely without Mrs. Lincoln. At last Mr. Lincoln could stand it no longer. He decided to go back to his old home in Kentucky for a visit.

“Be good children and do the best you can until I come home again,” he said, and rode away on his horse.

Abe and Sarah often were frightened after their father had gone, but they tried to be brave. They liked to go through the woods picking berries, following deer paths, or watching different birds and animals. Most of the time they stayed at home and did the work. Every night they prayed that their father would soon come home.

One day Abe heard the noise of wagon wheels. A big wagon, pulled by four oxen, came slowly down the road toward the cabin. There were five people in the wagon. One of them was Mr. Lincoln. As soon as the oxen stopped, Abe and Sarah watched their father help the others from the wagon.

"I have brought you a new mother," he said. "Here are your two new sisters and your new brother, Johnny."

"How do you do?" asked Abe and Sarah, too surprised to say anything more.

"I think you have been brave to stay





alone," said the new Mrs. Lincoln. "Now you can have fun playing with your new sisters and brother."

"Do you go hunting?" asked Johnny.

"Abe wouldn't kill any animal. He loves animals," said Sarah. "Some boys at school wanted him to tease a live mud turtle, but Abe wouldn't do it."

"I will show you a salt lick in the woods," said Abe. "Many deer go there because they like to lick the salt."

Abe was glad there was another boy in the family. Now he could have someone to wrestle.

## Abe Learns Many Things

"There is going to be a new teacher in the backwoods school," Abe said to his father one day. "Will you let me go there?"

Abe wanted to learn everything he could. He was willing to walk nine miles along a deer path to reach the school and nine miles home again every day.

"Please let Abe go to school, Father. He likes to study and he is good in games," said Sarah. "He can run faster and jump higher than any of the other boys."

Mr. Lincoln thought for a little while. Then he said, "You are only nine years old, Abe, but I guess your long legs are strong enough to carry you to school and back."

The day school opened, Abe started off with a book in one hand and a package of lunch under the other arm. He was so happy he almost ran.



Abe knew that in school he would need to write with a pen, so he found a wild turkey's feather and made a point on it. For ink he used juice of wild berries.

At home Abe did not have any paper, so he wrote on an old wooden shovel with a piece of partly burned wood. After he had covered the shovel with writing, he always scraped it so it would be clean the next time he wanted to use it.

In a few months the school closed. Abe never went to school again, but he never forgot how to study.



Several years later Mr. Lincoln decided to move from Pigeon Creek. "Some of the neighbors want to get new farms," he said. "We may as well all go together."

Abe helped build a strong wagon for Mrs. Lincoln and the children to ride in. The furniture would be piled in the wagon, too.

When all was ready, Abe went to the place in the woods where his mother was buried. He wanted to visit it once more before he left the old home at Pigeon Creek.

Abe took his time to reach the others. He wanted to plan what he would do when he reached the new home. He tried to think of a way to earn money. At last he caught up with his father, who was leading the oxen.

"Father," said Abe, "with the money I have saved I am going to buy a few things at the store in the next town. I think I can sell these things to other farmers who cannot go to the store for them."



Abe used all of his money and bought everything he could. He made a neat bundle and carried it on his back. As soon as he reached the country, he stopped at every house he saw. He always sold a few things, for he had pins, needles, thread, cloth and ribbon. These were things the people of the backwoods needed and were glad to buy.

The farmers liked to talk to Abe. Many times they asked him to read or write something for them.

When the travelers reached the Sangamon River, they saw large pieces of ice on it. The slow oxen did not like the cold water, but they lowered their heads and pulled as hard as they could through it. The men rode in the wagons to keep dry.

As Abe looked back, he saw that his dog had been left. He whistled, but the dog was afraid to swim through the pieces of ice. Abe took off his boots, rolled his trousers high, and walked back to get his pet.

"I do not like this cold water," Abe told his pet, "but I could not leave you."





## Snow and More Snow

The land on each side of the Sangamon River was level and very black. In the river were many fish. Along the shores were wild animals and birds which could be used for food. Sangamon was a good name for this river. It was an Indian word meaning, "good hunting ground."

Soon after the travelers stopped, each family built its own home. Abe helped cut down trees to get the land ready for planting. Abe's arms were long and strong, and he was a better chopper than any of the other boys or men.

Before Abe knew it, autumn had arrived. Each family had raised enough food for themselves and for their cattle. The mornings were frosty and the nights had turned cold. There was little work to be done, so there was more time for visiting.

The neighbors liked Abe. He was kind to them and was always glad to help anyone who was in trouble. He kept everyone laughing at his stories and jokes.

The months passed slowly, and at last it was the Christmas season. On Christmas morning Abe saddled his horse and rode to his cousin's home. There he received a book—the thing he liked best in all the world.

"I will never have enough books," said Abe, as he thanked his cousin for the gift.

During the afternoon, snow began to fall. In no time at all the ground was covered with it.

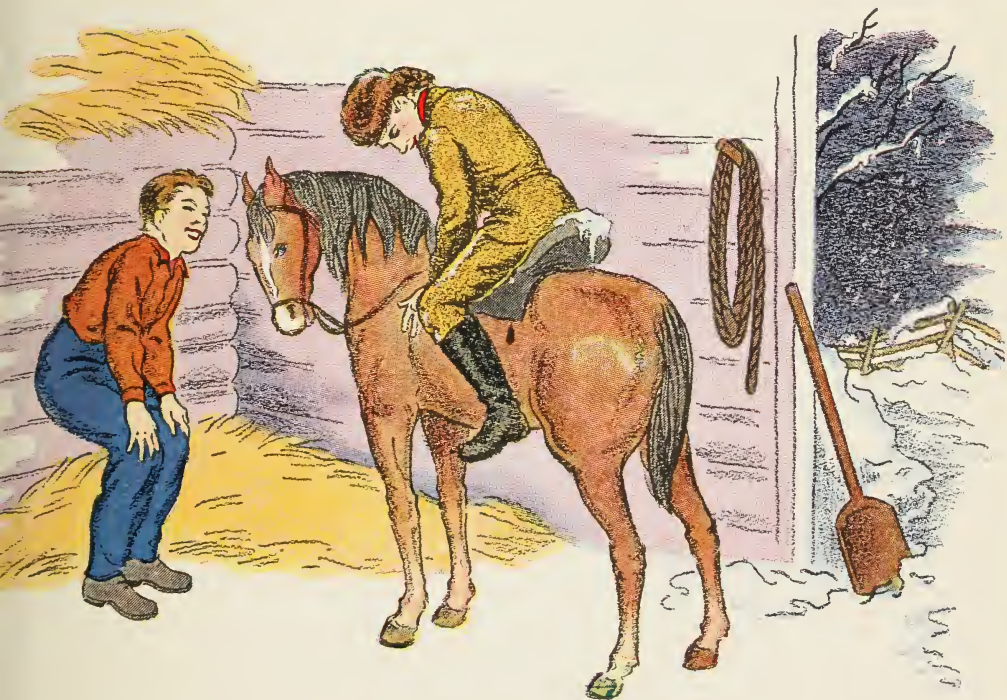
Abe decided he had better go home, for the storm was growing stronger and stronger. He got on his horse and headed toward home.

"You will have to find the way home," Abe said to the horse. "I cannot see the road."

The air had become very cold. Abe put his arms around the horse's neck, lay close to its back, and off they went.

It seemed hours later when the horse stopped beside the Lincoln cabin. Abe shouted, and Johnny came out with the wooden shovel. He shoveled the snow from the shed door, and Abe rode his horse in from the storm. Abe tried to get off his horse but he was frozen to the saddle.

"I am sticking to it!" cried Abe.





“The ice will have to melt before you can get loose,” said Johnny, laughing. “Hold still and I will help you off the horse—saddle and all.”

The Lincolns were surprised when Abe came into the cabin and told how the saddle had frozen to his clothes. They thought it must have been a funny sight and they all laughed.

Mrs. Lincoln called the family to the Christmas dinner. She had cooked a fine, big, wild turkey. There also was a pie made from dried apples and mush made from corn.

Everything tasted so good that everyone ate until they could eat no more. Then Abe read stories from the book his cousin had given him. This was a very happy Christmas day for all the Lincolns.



### Abe Leaves Home

Snow was piled high on the roads. The weather was so cold that people had to stay in their cabins. No outside work could be done, so Abe had enough time to read and study.

He liked to stretch out on the floor in front of the fireplace where the light from the burning logs made the pages of his book bright enough to read. When Mr. Lincoln saw Abe always with a book, he shook his head.

"What good will so much reading do you?" asked Mr. Lincoln. "I think your time is just wasted."

Abe answered, "The things I want to know are in books, Father. That is why I read every book I can get my hands on."

When the snow began to melt and the smell of spring came into the air, Abe put his clothes into a bundle and picked up his sharp ax.

"I am old enough now to earn my own money to live on," he said to his family. "First I am going to split more than a thousand rails for one of our neighbors. He has promised to give me enough money to buy some new clothes. After that I will find other work to do."

Mrs. Lincoln cried when she learned that Abe was going away.

"I shall miss you, Abe. You have always been very good to me," she said.



Abe worked day after day to cut down trees and to split logs for fence rails. When the pile of rails did not grow fast enough, Abe asked Johnny to help him.

One day Mr. Offut asked Abe to do some work for him. There were many barrels of pork which Mr. Offut wanted to sell in the big city of New Orleans, far down the river. He asked Abe to make the trip and to help sell the pork for him.

“As soon as Johnny and I have split these rails, we will go to work for you,” promised Abe, and he went on working.

Abe and Johnny worked harder than ever to get all the rails split. Then they found that Mr. Offut had no flatboat on which to make the trip to New Orleans. Abe and Johnny helped cut down more trees to make a good flatboat. It would be a long journey down the river to New Orleans, and the flatboat needed to be very strong.



## New Orleans

“This is a wonderful river,” Abe told the men on the flatboat, when at last they reached the wide Mississippi.

Their flatboat passed many boats, both large and small. Friendly captains on river boats called to the men, and they called back.

When the men reached the city, the pork was sold. The flatboat was sold, too, because the men knew they could not take it back up the Mississippi River.

“New Orleans is a big and beautiful city,” said Abe. “I want to stay here for some time and see all I can of it.”

Abe walked along the water front and looked at the boats which had come from other places. He walked up and down the streets and looked in the store windows. He talked to people he met. Abe was surprised to learn that many of them did not use the same language he did. The city had been settled by French people and many of them still used the French language.





There were Negroes everywhere. Abe saw many being sold in the market place. These Negroes were bought to be used as workers in sugar or cotton fields or in homes. Abe did not think it was right for Negroes to be bought and sold.

“Those who will not let others be free should not be free themselves,” he decided.

At last the time came for Abe and Johnny to end their adventure. Abe asked the captain of a Mississippi steamboat to let them ride home.

“You both may ride on my steamboat,” said the captain, “but you will have to earn your way by working.”

When the steamboat reached the last stopping place on the river, Abe and Johnny thanked the captain for the ride. They walked to the small town to give Mr. Offut the money they had received for the pork and the flatboat.



## New Salem

Mr. Offut wanted to open a store in New Salem. He asked Abe to help build the log cabin for it. He asked Abe to be the clerk in the new store, too.

As soon as the store was opened, Abe began to have his troubles. One day when he sold some tea to a woman, he did not give her as much as she paid for. That evening Abe carried the rest of the tea to her home. How surprised she was to hear Abe's story and to receive the rest of the tea.

Another time Abe did not give a man the correct change. When he made it right, the man was surprised to think that Abe would go to so much trouble just to return a few cents.

Many people heard these stories and soon they were calling young Lincoln "Honest Abe." They were glad to know they could trust the young clerk.

One day a traveler and his family stopped at the store. The man told Abe he needed food for his family.

"I have no money," he said, "but I have a barrel of old things which I would like to sell to you."

"I do not need the things," replied Abe, "but I will pay you half a dollar for the barrel."

For a long time the barrel stood where it had been placed after it was rolled out of the wagon.



When Abe decided to burn the barrel, he found several big heavy books in the bottom. The books explained different kinds of laws. As Abe read the books, he decided to study and learn the laws. Then he could help anyone who was in trouble.

Some of the people who traded at Mr. Offut's store could not pay for the things they bought. It took money to buy more things to put in the store. When the money did not come in, Mr. Offut said the store would have to be closed.

Honest Abe was out of work again. His friends heard about it and asked him to be the postmaster of the town.

"I will not get much pay for being postmaster," Abe told them, "but I will have enough time to do other work and earn more money."

Abe built fences, shelled corn, cut wood, and put shoes on horses.

When the stagecoach arrived, Abe was always there to meet it and get the mail from the driver. He put the few letters inside of his big hat and kept them until he could give them to the right people.

“One of these days there will be no more mail,” said Abe. “It costs so much to send a letter, people cannot write each other. Then I will be out of work again.”



## Springfield

When the town of New Salem did not need a postmaster any more, Abe decided to go a larger place. He thought he would have a better chance to earn money where there was more work.

Abe chose the city of Springfield as his next home, for thousands of people were there. He had heard Springfield was a busy place, with many stores and banks. Abe did not have money enough for a ride on the stagecoach, so he borrowed a horse from a friend.

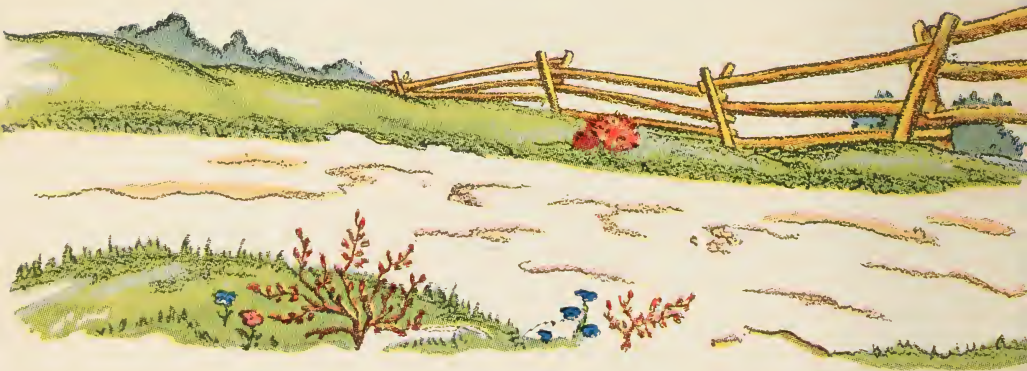
In one bag Abe packed his clothes. In another went his few law books and his Bible. When Abe was ready for his adventure, his friends gathered to see him go. Abe said good-by to them and thanked them for all the kind things they had done for him while he had lived there.

As Abe rode along, he wondered how he could earn money to live on in Springfield. He thought he might be a carpenter, for he knew how to build strong boats and fine log cabins. He knew how to shoe horses, too. He felt sure he could find enough work to do.

Abe had hoped for a long time to become a lawyer. That meant he would have to study very hard, for he had many things to learn. Abe would not mind studying; he had a good mind and he liked to make use of it.

“For a year or two I could try being a lawyer,” he said to himself. “If I make good, I will be a lawyer for the rest of my life.”

Abe’s eyes were shining as he thought of the many things he would do. He would work hard, he would help people, and he would make all the friends he could.





Abe hoped these friends would call him Abe Lincoln just as everyone had always done; but when he wrote his name, he would sign it the right way—Abraham Lincoln.

“It is a good enough name,” he said. “Who knows! Some day Abraham Lincoln may be of some use to the country.”

